

Coyotes back, *Animals - Coyotes* with a vengeance

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Deer killed by pack in Surplus Street yard

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DUXBURY — When Mark and Linda Collins of Surplus Street awoke last Tuesday, they found an unpleasant surprise outside their front door: blood.

Blood stains, on their door and the side of their neighbor's house, were just the beginning. Soon, they also found what remained of a deer.

The attack by a pack of coyotes occurred between the two families' properties. Though they didn't witness the incident, Mark Collins said they could trace the steps of the fight by the blood and guts left behind in the snow.

The coyotes threw the lone deer against the Collins' front door, then against the side of their neighbor's home, leaving trails of blood running down both. The deer was killed near the latter home, then dragged farther into the yard, where it became dinner.

"Coyotes are very opportunistic," animal control officer Eddy Ramos said. "If a car kills a deer, they'll take it. Free meal."

They often prey on weakened animals, Ramos said, particularly when they have the backing of a pack.

Ramos said the deer was probably old or sick. Most deer can outrun coyotes.

Collins said he'd seen a deer meandering past his house earlier in the day.

"They must have gotten him," he said.

All that was left for the homeowners to find in the morning was blood and bones and fur.

"There was at least a hundred yards of blood trail," he added.

Collins, whose home is at the end of Surplus Street near Depot Street, said he and his neighbors hear coyotes howl every night.

Ramos said areas near the woods and bogs are most susceptible to an influx of coyotes.

"They don't make a sound when they are hunting their prey, but af-

wards, they start barking to alert the others that they've made the kill," Collins said.

There is an abundance of wild animals in the neighborhood, including both deer and coyotes, as well as smaller creatures like squirrels.

"But you don't really see the squirrels anymore," Collins said. "And the coyotes killed three of our cats."

Ramos said coyotes are thriving in the state of Massachusetts. They can even be found on the Boston Common.

A half-dozen years ago, he said, they were thin and mangy-looking. But as the numbers of hunters decreased, the number of deer increased, giving coyotes ample food.

The average coyote, which looks like a small wolf or husky, weighs only about 40-45 pounds. But in recent years, Ramos has seen 50-60 pound coyotes.

"My neighbor's two daughters, they're young; they're scared to even come outside now," Collins said. "The whole street has been ravaged by them."

A small dog, a Corgi, was killed by coyotes in Pembroke the week prior to the deer incident.

There are, however, simple precautions residents can take to protect themselves and their pets from the predators, which can travel in packs of two to five, on average.

He suggests not leaving small animals outside at night, and turning on a radio or banging pots to scare them off before walking outside.

"Mostly, it's just common sense," Collins said.

Small animals, like cats, are a major target, he said. Older animals are also at risk.

"If they're going blind or deaf, they won't know to run," Ramos said.

Coyotes normally eat small rodents, raccoons, and squirrels, Ramos said. But they can attack humans and house pets.

Ramos reminds people never to turn and run when faced with a coyote, as they'll just look like normal prey.

"When my wife and kids come home now at night, I go out with a flashlight," Collins said.

"They don't make a sound when they hunt."

— Eddy Ramos